Geographical Proximity and Historical Experience as a Basis for Active Foreign Policy Strategy of Small European States – the Case of Austria and Slovenia regarding the Western Balkans

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ESSAYS

Geographical Proximity and Historical Experience as a Basis for Active Foreign Policy Strategy of Small European States – the Case of Austria and Slovenia regarding the Western Balkans[2]

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Abstract: *The author tests the theory of a small (European) state's active foreign policy of choosing to cooperate in a field where it could use its historical experience and geographical proximity to an area as a basis for its active foreign policy strategy. She claims that it is the change of external determinants of foreign policy which makes a small European state decide to use its historical experience or geographical proximity and a relevant area of cooperation, but in some cases selectively. The theory is verified on the basis of two small European states, Austria and Slovenia, and their historical experience, and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans.*

Key words: ***small states, foreign policy, history, geography, Europe***

Introduction

The goal of this paper is to analyse whether a small European state necessarily chooses to cooperate in a field where it could use its historical experience of and geographical proximity to an area as a basis for its active foreign policy strategy and, if not, to establish the determinants which make it decide not to pursue this or any other kind of foreign policy strategy.

Firstly, there will be a short overview of small states' scope of foreign policy strategies in international relations (IR), and the small states' most common foreign policy strategies will be identified, with the distinction between the traditional passive (pre-Cold War) and more active strategies after the Cold War. In the second section I will explore one of the latter, namely the strategy of using capabilities, based on geographical proximity to and historical experience of an important geographical area. I will argue that history and geography as internal determinants of foreign policy, are more likely to be used in cases where changes appear in an external foreign policy environment. In the following section I will apply this theory to the case of Austria and Slovenia, both small non-pole European states during the Cold War and geographically and historically close to the Western Balkans; test whether the stated theory is true in their case and if not, try to identify the specific situations or possible reasons why either of them applied a different foreign policy strategy. In conclusion, I will present the findings of the analysis.

[2] The author would like to thank Zlatko Šabič and an anonymous reviewer for valuable comments.

The methodological approach applied in this research will be a literature review of the possibilities and formulation of a small state's foreign policy strategies and a comparison of two case studies, with the latter being done by content analysis of primary sources. Then, the foreign policy strategies of the two respective governments will be analysed.

Small European states' scope for creating an active foreign policy strategy

Traditional political theory has offered a very limited understanding of the small state's abilities and possibilities for foreign policy action in IR; authors have mainly claimed that the first and ultimate foreign policy goal (interest) of a small state was to achieve "defensive power", which means "autonomy, i.e. ability to resist offensive power of other units" (Mouritzen, 1998: 44) or the ability to prevent others from affecting its own behaviour (Singer – Goetschel, 2000: 6).[3] This was mainly the perception of small European states' foreign policy range during the Cold War, when security was the main "high politics" issue dealt with within the alliances of each pole. The small European states, especially those which were outside the security alliances, were therefore mainly perceived as being able to pursue a passive foreign policy – maintaining the status quo (Benko, 1992: 6) by a form of non-commitment or neutrality (Mouritzen, 1998: 44), conflict avoiding behaviour (Väyrynen, 1971: 96; Baillie, 1998; Erling, 1968: 167) and avoiding large risks or costs – a low profile (East, 1973: 558; Baillie, 1998: 210). Mouritzen (1998: 43) claims that in the Cold War period the higher the level of tension between the two poles in a symmetric constellation, the lower was a non-pole[4] small state's defensive power.[5] Nevertheless, many small states[6] have, on the other hand been able to exercise active foreign policy serving their national interests in some fields of international cooperation (Goetschel, 2000: 6). An active foreign policy's main purpose is to be a foreign policy as defined by the small state itself; in some cases it is an offensive policy in the way of searching for alliances (Benko, 1997: 251) too. In the example above Mouritzen (1998: 44) explains that since a small state's defensive power would be lower, its behaviour would become more active, applying the strategies of non-commitment, acting as a counterweight and, possibly, a mediator. Another possible explanation of the opportunity for a more active foreign policy behaviour of small European states during the Cold War was the growing complexity of the international community, "dealt with" in the growing number of international governmental (regional) organizations, which has provided

[3] Singer, Marshall R. (1972: 54) *Weak states in a world of powers. The dynamics of international relationships*. New York: The Free Press. In Goetschel (2000: 6).

[4] a non-pole state is a state not belonging to either of the two (military) alliances, the Western or Eastern.

[5] The small European states belonging to one or another pole did not have much real political choice to apply their own foreign policy independently. Their choice of foreign policy behaviour was mostly "bandwagonning" (Mouritzen, 1998: 50).

[6] The literature on small states mainly cites the following: Austria, Luxembourg, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland.

more fields of cooperation and therefore also ”situations in which quantitative power attributes were not essential” (Goetschel, 2000: 6–7; Hey 2002).

After the end of the Cold War, when states and cooperation within international organizations had shaken off the bipolar system constraints,[7] strategies for a small (European) states' foreign policy indicated opportunities for being more active. The strategies even to show possible ways for small states to gain influence (in international fora). These possible strategies[8] are: use of information technology (Tonra, 2002: 345); factors linked to the structure of the negotiation process (Sundelius – Goetschel, 2000: 5;[9] Baillie, 1998) such as (diplomatic) bargaining, mediation (being an honest broker); l'art de convaincre; (Erling, 1968: 165; Väyrynen, 1971: 96; Baillie, 1998; Jazbec, 2001: 58; Hey 2002: 219); expertise and knowledge (Kronsell, 2002, Hey, 2002; Sundelius – Goetschel, 2000: 5); qualification of diplomats and organization of the administration (Zupančič, 2003; Hey, 2002; Knudsen, 2002: 190); good leadership (Hey, 2002; Knudsen, 2002: 190), political legitimacy (Knudsen, 2002: 190); national policies as examples of success (Petrič, 1996: 879; Kronsell, 2002), setting clear priorities (Zupančič, 2003: 100), forming flexible alliances (Zupančič, 2003: 100), being adaptable (Väyrynen, 1971: 96; Knudsen, 2002: 188; Tonra, 2002: 345), norm setting (Kronsell, 2002) and exploiting (political) market niches (Antola et al. in Zupančič, 2003).[10] In the international organizations a small state's preference for support of strong and effective common institutions has also been identified (Baillie, 1998; Tonra, 2002: 347; Hey, 2002).

As part of a foreign policy strategy, a small state also has to choose its primary field(s) of cooperation in IR. Since it has less resources of its own (financial, natural, human), it is bound to choose fewer fields of cooperation so it can mainly focus its resources and efforts on the selected fields (Paterson, 1969: 122). Therefore, it has to choose wisely. The so-called sectoral approach of small state perception (Šabič, 2002: 5) offers an analysis of a small state's action (and influence) in specific areas of cooperation, but most importantly also indicates how a small state chooses its issue specific field(s). Small states specifically select a field of cooperation where they try to (and can) turn their existing resources and capabilities to their advantage, meaning they "/…/ choose an issue regarding which they can best use their capabilities" (Šabič, 2002: 6). In some cases this can even represent ”comparative advantages” (in the form of knowledge, experience, expertise, tradition and successful national policies) compared to other states, which a small country can therefore make use of in

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[7] The international organizations have in fact become crucial centres of interaction and decision-making (Goetschel, 2000: 7).

[8] Here I do not distinguish between strategies (long-term, enabling prediction of foreign policy) and instruments (which are short-term or temporary) of foreign policy. Later on, my attention is devoted only to foreign policy strategies.

[9] Sundelius, Bengt (1980: 202) *Independence and Foreign Policy, Cooperation and Conflict* 15: 187–208. In Goetschel (2000: 5).

[10] Antola E. – Lehtimaki? M. (2001) *Small States in the EU: Problems and Prospects of the Future*. In Zupančič (2003: 103).

order to achieve its foreign policy goals (Antola – Lehtimaki in Zupančič, 2003: 103; Bojinović, 2004). Zupančič (2003) points out that this can be a foreign policy strategy that is especially appealing to new small (European) states which are still entering international fora (e. g. European Union) and want to shape their proper foreign policy profile in international organization(s) as soon as possible. Good examples of the latter are: the Swedish norm setting role in the case of EU environmental policy (Kronsell, 2002), Finnish mediation interest in EU-Russian relations (Zupančič, 2003: 104) and Luxembourg's successful negotiation/mediation in economic/financial aspects of European integration (Baillie 1998; Hey 2002).

Some authors (Erling, 1968; Benko, 1992; Petrič, 1996; Mouritzen, 1998; Baillie, 1998; Hey, 2002) extend the presented range of proposed small states' foreign policy strategies to the possibility of acting in a field of cooperation where a small state can use its capabilities deriving from its (strategic) geographical position and historical experience.[11] The goal of this paper is to pursue this research agenda, meaning researching whether a small European state necessarily chooses to cooperate in a field where it could use its historical experience of and geographical proximity to an area, as a basis for its foreign policy strategy and, if not, to establish the determinants which make it decide not to pursue this or any other kind of foreign policy strategy.

Geographical proximity and historical context regarding an area as a basis for small state's foreign policy strategy

The meaning of history and geography as a basis for small state's active foreign policy strategy

Benko (1992: 6) claims that a small state pursuing an active foreign policy strategy has to make use of the advantages arising from security geography. Petrič (1996: 896) even notes that a small state should do everything in order to assert itself as an active agent and partner in its own region, especially in cases if problems arise in the area. Baillie (1998) and Hey (2002) mention the value of historical experience linked to a geographical position as a small state's source of knowledge and negotiation assets. According to these authors, the claim that the capabilities of a small state, deriving from its geographical proximity to an area together with its historical experience in this it, can be used in a similar geographical region or in a very different form of cooperation. An example of geographical experience is the Finnish mediation interest in EU-Russian relations, based on the special "adaptive acquiescence" behaviour (experience) towards the Soviet Union in the Cold War (Mouritzen, 1998: 93) or Luxembourg's cross-border cooperation with France and Germany, based on knowledge (language and culture) of the German and nations (Baillie, 1998). An example of a different form of cooperation is Luxembourg's negotiation ability, deriving from linguistic and

[11] Some authors (Paterson, 1969: 122; Väyrynen, 1971: 96) also speak of small states' foreign policy focus on their regional area, but do not explain the motivation for this action except a lack of resources.

cultural knowledge of Germany and France, being used in many EU cooperation fields (Baillie, 1998).[12] Geographical proximity and historical experience are interconnected and should be of importance not only to the small state but also to the international "context" in which a small state acts (e. g. to an international organization). Erling (1968: 158–59) even notes that the importance of a small state's geographical position increases if the intensity of a large power's interest grows, where the latter could, in current IR, also be interpreted as the interest of an international organization.

In the following section I will look at how history and geography can be used as a basis for (small states') foreign policy strategy by researching their role as internal determinants of foreign policy.

The mechanism of using history and geography as basis for foreign policy strategy

Benko (1997: 233) defines geography and history as determinants of the internal environment of a state's foreign policy. Geography is understood in connection with the state's extent; location; strategic geopolitical position; configuration of borders; location of the territory in an international environment and international communications network. Geography also means the state's natural resources (ibid.). History, as another internal determinant, is understood as the historical development of the society and the historical memory, meaning national historical self-understanding (self-perception) regarding the development and experiences of the society (ibid).[13] The external environment of foreign policy is on the other hand the "outside world", involving the coexistence of states with transnational relations (Hill, 2003: 186) and is mainly determined by features of a certain international system, including the role of international organizations (Benko, 1997: 236). This environment also has geographical, economic, cultural, and other determinants (ibid.), but they are defined as constituting an external environment of foreign policy because they are "not easily susceptible to change and not part of the political process, which generates decisions" (Hill, 2003: 186).[14] The internal (domestic) and external environments of foreign policy are not separated, but are in interaction, which is well shown by Mouritzen (1998: 82).[15] In this

[12] In this case the possibilities are used more as one of the sources of a small state's influence (Baillie, 1998) and not "only" as a determinant for choosing a field of cooperation.

[13] Some other foreign policy internal environment determinants are economic, cultural and military (security) factors, and formulation, conduct and implementation of foreign policy decisions (Benko, 1997: 233–35). The paper will not devote particular attention to these determinants as a basis for foreign policy strategy, and factors such as economic interests for the formulation of a foreign policy strategy will not be dealt with as such.

[14] The external environment of foreign policy is not simply equivalent to the external environment of a state. The state's external environment is everything physical outside its borders, but some physical external environment factors of foreign policy such as climate, topography or mineral resources (which are also some aspects of a state's geography) are placed inside territorial limits. Nevertheless, these factors change slowly and are relatively immune to political intervention, and are therefore perceived as external (Hill, 2003: 174). However, as Benko (1997: 233) notes, ultimately a state's own perception of a determinant makes this an internal foreign policy determinant.

[15] Mouritzen (1998: 81–82) claims that an explanation of foreign policy can best be done by supplementing levels of analysis. This means that an explanation belonging to one specific level can somehow be

regard he assumes Goldmann's[16] three models of internal-external foreign policy sources (determinants) interplay, one of which is a so-called requisite (control-relax) model, by which external determinants influence the relation between internal factors and foreign policy (Mouritzen, 1998: 82) (further on used as a model for Figure 1).

This confirms that the geographical position of a (small) state or the perception of it is an important internal factor upon which a state will formulate its foreign policy. As previously mentioned, geography can be understood as a determinant of both the internal and external foreign policy environments: internal as a self-perception of geographical position and external because geography is a part of the external, independent and slow--changing physical world (Hill, 2003: 166). From this it can be inferred that it is more likely that geography is also understood as an internal determinant of foreign policy when the geographical external environment is in the process of change. An evident example of that would be a change of an international system or foundation of new states. Less obvious but not less important is the generally accepted and empirically supported social science theory of external environment danger – internal cohesion-centralization (Mouritzen, 1998: 84–85), which is especially true for small states.[17] This is more directly connected to the geographical proximity of a state to an area, but the author also adds that when the environment becomes more stable domestic political actors get used to it and natural stereotypes may be applied to other units in the neighbourhood (e.g. "hereditary enemy" and "big brother complex"). This usually can lead to domestic institutionalization of the salient environment (sedimentation), including its challenges and preferred ways of dealing with them by developing a certain pattern of rhetoric and bureaucratic code language (Mouritzen, 1998: 92). "In this way the domestic actors can be used by the foreign policy leadership to push in the "right' direction" (ibid.).

History can similarly be used to support foreign policy direction by launching a "great narrative" and to have a cumulative effect through practice (Grosser, 2002: 363). The author defines history in four terms, namely as the "weight" of history, its "laws", "choices" and "the belief in it", where the weight of history represents an accumulative heritage, either in the form of individual or collective experience or in the form of references, transmitted within an organization, institutions or a social or national group (Grosser, 2002: 262). The author also points out to the use of both, geography and history, claiming that they "can both be understood as *contrainte* (restriction) or *patrimoine* (heritage), depending on how they are (selectively or statically) represented by those who are in charge of the representation" (Grosser, 2002: 362). He describes the possibility of choosing "from history" in order to support and

supplemented with factors belonging to other levels if the first cannot in itself account satisfactorily for what it set out to explain.

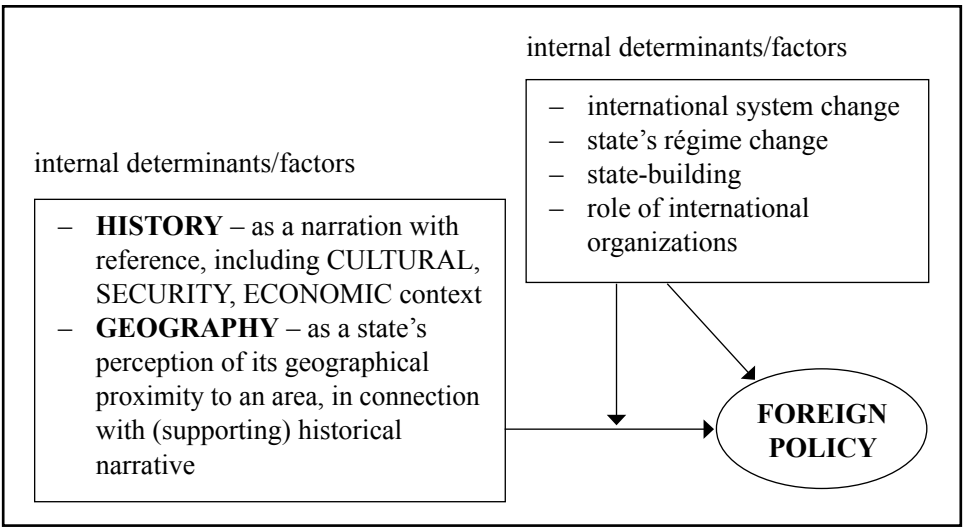
[16] Goldmann, Kjell (1976): The Foreign Sources of Foreign Policy: Causes, Conditions or Inputs? In Mouritzen (1998: 82–83).

[17] The author nevertheless draws attention to cases described by many authors (Coser, 1951; Otterbin – Stein, 1976: 148; Mintz, 1951; Williams, 1947) when this theory does not apply, namely when the initial solidarity between (internal) sub-units does not exceed a critical threshold (i.e. minimum consensus) or if the external pressure does not apply evenly (roughly speaking) to the sub-units (Mouritzen, 1998: 88).

legitimize a certain direction of foreign policy (Grosser, 2002: 371, 375),[18] where history also "can be read and values can be put on certain geographical positions or experience" (ibid.). On the other hand, a historical narrative with reference can be turned around by an event such as the fall of a state system (régime) or a negative experience regarding an event linked to the narrative (e. g. losing a war) (Grosser, 2002: 381). The selective role of history can be seen very well in cases of new states being formed (state-building), when it is hard to construct a policy without referring itself to traditions and therefore "to find a 'usable past' is a task of every new state" (Grosser, 2002: 375). History in this regard is used instrumentally, and state-building is an external determinant of foreign policy, understood as a formulation of a state regarding its external environment. On the other hand, Baillie (1998) and Hey (2002) describe historical experience as a tool which offers a small state a (cultural) knowledge of other states (in proximity) to which a history of cooperation is linked. Here I would add that history of cooperative relations among states in geographical proximity brings about more than "just" cultural (linguistic) knowledge; cooperation with states in geographical proximity also creates a heritage of economic and security related historical experience (historical memory).[19]

In Figure 1 the mechanism of using history and geography as a basis for foreign policy strategy is presented within the framework of interplay between internal and external factors (determinants) of foreign policy.

Figure 1: Mechanism of Using History and Geography as a Basis for Foreign Policy Strategy



[18] Two examples "from history" are the formulation of Austrian neutrality after 1955 and the legitimacy of Franco-German relations in the European integration process (Grosser, 2002: 346).

[19] The reasons why states cooperate in the first place are mostly linked to economy and security (although cultural incentives should not be neglected).

From the examples above it is possible to affirm that both geography and even more history (as claimed by Grosser, 2002: 375) are used as political resources in the framework of the internal environment of a state's foreign policy. It is also possible to assert that history and geography, as sources (bases) for formulation of foreign policy strategy, may be used in cases of international system change, a country's change of government and the foundation of new states (state-building) and that the role of international organizations in this regard is also important:

- "geography (reference to a proximity to a certain geographical area) as an internal source of foreign policy is more likely to be used by a state in cases where the external environment is in the process of change, in order to support a foreign policy strategy,
- history (reference to a certain historical experience) as an internal source of foreign policy is likely to be: a) used the basis of accumulated knowledge and experience, as a foreign policy asset; b) more selectively (instrumentally) used in cases of new states being founded (state-building) in order to support "the right way" of foreign policy strategy (domestic institutionalization and the application of stereotypes towards units in the neighbourhood),
- great narratives can be turned around by an event like a change of state régime or a negative experience linked to the previous narration."

Based on the revealed theoretical possibilities of a small state's foreign policy strategies and the mechanism of using history and geography as a basis for foreign policy strategy, attention will now be turned to the two case studies. There will be an examination of whether Slovenia and Austria, which I arbitrarily regard as small European states, with historical and geographical ties (i.e. experience and proximity, respectively) to the Western Balkans, have chosen to use these ties as a basis for their active foreign policy strategies (they have chosen to cooperate on issues where they would make use of this historical and geographical circumstance) or if they have not, what are the reasons for this.

Slovene and Austrian historical context and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans as a basis for their active foreign policy strategy

I will investigate the foreign policy strategy (and actions) of the two respective governments towards the Western Balkans[20] on the basis of their official foreign policy

[20] The Western Balkans is an area in South Eastern Europe, comprising Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia (all former Republics of the former Yugoslavia), with the exception of Slovenia and Albania. It is a political term (in contrast to the Balkans as a geographical notion of a mountain range on the Balkan peninsula), founded by EU in 1998 at the European Council in Vienna. Strategy paper presented to the special meeting of "The Club of Three and the Balkans" (Club of Three, 2000: 13–14) claims the term is inappropriate and suggests retaining South Eastern Europe. The latter nevertheless is a broader term, mainly understood in a political sense to describe the majority of the states in this geographical area; those that are in the process of transition and therefore still entering the European integration process. The term came into everyday use when the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe was launched in 1999.

strategy documents (and action). I will briefly present the historical and geographical context of relations between the two states and the mentioned area and, further on, concentrate on the time period from the end of the Cold War until the present day.[21]

Austrian foreign policy strategy regarding the Western Balkans

Austria today does not directly border any of the states of the Western Balkans, but is situated very close to the northwestern part of the region. Its historical links with the area go back to the 16th century, when the Habsburgs expanded their territory to the southeast (as far as Croatia) in order to create a defence zone against Turkish invasions. The monarchy's involvement in the Balkans was oriented even more towards the South at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, when its ambitions to gain a passage to the nearby straits in the Mediterranean led it to include Bosnia and Herzegovina under its administration in 1878. This action not only intensified a long-lasting rivalry between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia in the area, but – after Bosnian annexation in 1908 – also increased its tensions with Serbia (Vad'sse, 2000: 32). The Empire at that time, with the help of its ally, Germany, strengthened its position in the Balkans, but its territorial claims provoked the other large players in the area, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, to intensify their own pressure, and caused revolts from the surrounding nations. This led to the two Balkan wars of 1912–1913, in which Austria took part, either by direct military involvement or through financial support (ibid.). After the Serbs had reinforced their claims to unify the Southern Slavs, still under Austrian domination, the situation became more explosive and in June 1914 resulted in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Bosnia, and consequently in an unfeasible Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, which was practically a declaration of war.[22]

After the First World War the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated, and it should be clearly noted that this meant a major change for Austrian foreign policy too. Austria's standing suddenly turned from being a large empire to being able to "only" to act as a small state. Between the two world wars Austria was more occupied by internal political affairs and especially with the great economic crisis in the late 1920s and in the beginning of the 1930s. In foreign policy Austria was dealing with (territorial) pressures from neighbouring states, Germany and Italy, therefore its foreign policy activities were not much involved with the Balkan States; one example of its policy in this region was fixing the southern border (with present day Slovenia) in 1920. Before the *Anschluss* in 1938 Austria was facing demands to align its foreign policy with that of the Reich (Vad'sse, 2000: 21), and during the Second World War Austria, under German annexation, occupied most parts of Yugoslavia. In its constitutional treaty of 1955 Austria had to assume a neutral status in international affairs and was therefore

[21] I have chosen the end of Cold War as a point in time when states were able to pursue more active foreign policy strategies. It should be noted here that Slovenia had officially become a recognized independent state after 1989; therefore its policy until 1992 will be assumed on the basis of its foreign policy strategy as a Yugoslav Republic.

[22] The latter is also perceived as the cause of the First World War.

a non-pole state during the Cold War. But as Goetschel (2000: 12) claims, "the country never saw neutrality as an obstacle to active multilateral engagement; on the contrary /…/." It has created a role for itself in fields of development policy, peacekeeping and conflict resolution (ibid.).[23] As the state was a "grey area" between East and West (Goetschel, 2000: 13) it undertook a role of bridge-building and offering "Good Offices".[24] In this regard Austria also conducted its political cooperation with the Western Balkan states, which mainly constituted Yugoslavia (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – SFRY).[25] Although it was pursuing an active foreign policy in this view, "Austria stuck to autonomy (passive foreign policy) as far as its core neutrality obligation was concerned" (Goetschel, 2000: 13).

In 1989 Austria saw the revolutionary changes in the Eastern Bloc as a promising development for rapprochement of West and East and the latter's path to democratization and a market economy. Austria understood this situation as a change of its position, which placed the country "back in the heart of Europe" which consequently offered new opportunities for its activities in the framework of neutrality. In 1989 Austria also presented its candidacy for membership in the European Community. Its geographical priorities have not changed, and Austria continues to provide assistance to former Eastern Bloc states to pursue the democratization process.[26] "As a neighbour, Austria was also called upon to assist the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe to overcome the disastrous legacy of Communism."[27] In 1989 Austria launched its Central European Initiative (CEI) to cooperate with the countries in its neighbouring region, namely Yugoslavia, Italy and Hungary.[28] Austria turned its attention more to Southeastern Europe because conflicts there began in 1991.[29] It stated that "for geographical and historical reasons it has always had a close relationship with its neighbours in Southeastern Europe, including Yugoslavia. /…/ Austria repeatedly advocated action by the international community and advanced a series of concrete proposals to this end."[30] It expressed its deep security concern for its own existence with regard to the development of hostile developments in the Balkans.[31] This concern

[23] Austria was very active within the Council of Europe, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the United Nations, but did not join the EU.

[24] "Prior to 1989 Austria was trying to establish at a government level a dialogue between states from ideologically antagonistic camps, between Communist dictatorships on the one hand and pluralist democracies in the other and thereby to promote a policy of *détente*" (*Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1993, p. VIII*).

[25] Although SFRY was not a part of either bloc, it was a leading state of the Non-aligned movement.

[26] *Außenpolitischer Bericht 1989, Jahrbuch der österreichischen Außenpolitik. Bundesministerium für auswärtige Angelegenheiten*, p. IX.

[27] *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, p. VI.

[28] Außenpolitischer Bericht 1989, p. 10. Later on, in 1990, the Czech and Slovak Republics (at the time still Czechoslovakia) joined, as did Poland in 1991 (*Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, p. 53).

[29] Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Austria's activities in the region had already begun 1989, when it mediated bilaterally in the human rights breaches in Kosovo, and within the framework of OSCE (for more see Jandl, 1999).

[30] *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, p. 38.

[31] *Ibid*.

increased in 1992 when Austria clearly changed its security strategy from neutrality to active cooperation in the EU integration process. Austria stated that EU membership would give it greater security assurances, which were obviously not satisfied within the possibilities of the passive neutrality foreign policy strategy. The reason for this re-orientation was the perception of an unstable geopolitical environment, colourfully represented in the statement that Austria's international position in 1992 was largely determined by the "Maastricht – Sarajevo field of tension."[32] The new security strategy can also be explained by the external environment danger – internal cohesion theory. In 1994 Austria presented its foreign policy strategy of cooperation within the EU (of which it became a member in the following year), where it stressed that its policy towards the Balkans would be continued in the EU too, and it referred to another, existing foreign policy key goal, namely the "support for enlargement of the EU in Central and Eastern Europe for many historical and geographical reasons."[33] The two goals have been emphasized more ever since: a) enlargement into (and strengthening relations with) Central and Eastern Europe, which would be a priority objective of Austria's foreign policy in Europe, not only for political and economic reasons, but "mostly because a region – with which Austria has the most intimate historical, cultural and economic links – will start to grow together once more"[34]; and b) special attention to the Balkan Region will further on be given within the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).[35] In 2003 Austria set an even closer approach of the EU to the Western Balkans as its priority.[36]

The analysis of the Austrian foreign policy strategy regarding the Western Balkans shows that after the Cold War Austria did use its historical experience and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans as a basis for its foreign policy strategy. This was Austria's most recent experience, namely its cooperation with Yugoslavia during the Cold War; Austria did not use its previous negative experiences and historical memory regarding the Western Balkans as a reference for foreign policy strategy. It therefore did choose a field of cooperation on the basis of its (positive) historical and geographical context regarding the Western Balkans. Austria did not have to build a new foreign policy regarding its political relations towards the Western Balkans, since it

[32] *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, p VII. Austria was at the time waiting for the EU membership negotiations to commence. Joining the EU was gradually gaining importance due to the other – very different – source of tension, i. e. the beginning of Balkan conflicts as a danger to stability in its immediate neighbourhood. Although not yet a member of the EU at this time, Austria actively expressed its foreign policy stance towards the Western Balkans in the EU too (*Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1992*, p. 46).

[33] *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1994*, p. VIII.

[34] *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1999*, p. VI.

[35] *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1995*, p. VIII and *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1999*, p. VII.

[36] In this regard, Austria stated its priority was to successfully complement the Stabilization and Association Process and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SP SEE), under the leadership of its special coordinator, former Austrian Vice-Chancellor Erhard Busek (*Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 2003*, pp. 49–50). Dr. Busek, appointed to this position in 2001, was not the first high-ranking diplomat Austria appointed as part of the solution to the Balkan crisis; in 1998 the Austrian Ambassador to Belgrade, Wolfgang Petritsch, was appointed EU special envoy to Kosovo (*Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1998*, p. 28–29).

had only continued its mediation, conflict resolution and bridge-building role from the Cold War era; its foreign policy strategy in this regard did not have to change because of the change of the external environment, namely the nature of the international system. Nevertheless, as soon as conflicts erupted in the Balkans, Austria was placed in the immediate area of violence and felt endangered. Its neutrality (passive security strategy) was not adequately providing security any more. Therefore, due to changes in perception of its geographical proximity Austria consequently also made its foreign policy security strategy more active (moving away from the policy of ”sitting still” or standing aside),[37] aiming for higher security guarantees within EU CFSP.[38] The geographical proximity to and historical experience of the Western Balkans did not make Austria ”preoccupied” or “labelled” with this (see further on), as its identity was even more firmly based in Central Europe. On the other hand, Austria did not need to choose a field of cooperation in the EU by claiming advantages on the basis of its historical experience of and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans, because cooperating in this area was already its role and since it had experience which was very much desired by the EU, this foreign policy strategy/activity of Austria was already recognized by the EU (member states).

Slovenian foreign policy strategy regarding the Western Balkans

Before being fully independent for the first time,[39] Slovenes were part of three states with populations of mainly South Slavic peoples (an internationally unrecognized country, a kingdom and a socialist federal republic), the second two popularly named the “First and the Second Yugoslavia”. Both internationally recognized states were formed after the First and the Second World War respectively. Before 1918 Slovenes were (with some other South Slavic peoples) for centuries a part of the Habsburg and later on the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Overall, Slovenes have participated in different forms of states, where nations – and Slovenes in particular – had different positions regarding their equality, and the dissatisfaction with the latter was also one of the reasons for Slovenes wanting to pursue the formation of their own state in 1990.[40]

Even before Slovenia was internationally recognized, it had produced a form of foreign policy strategy[41]. The position of Slovenia in this strategy regarding the countries of the Western Balkans as they existed at the time was concentrated only in the Yugoslav republics (not mentioning Albania) with two main concerns: a) to develop

[37] *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1994*, p. VIII.

[38] Nevertheless, Austria achieved an exception regarding its neutrality, which might be observed also within the (W)EU.

[39] The (hi)story of Slovene independence from the referendum in December 1990 to the declaration of independence in June 1991 and international recognition on 15 January 1992 is well documented in literature (see for example Bučar & Brinar, 1994 or Bučar, 1995)

[40] For a more detailed description of Slovene political history as a Slav nation and the reasons for the move to independence see Bučar & Brinar, 1994: 425–427.

[41] Temelji strategije zunanje politike Republike Slovenije [Foreign Policy Strategy Basics of the Republic of Slovenia], Poročevalec Skupščine RS in Skupščine SFRJ [Information Letter from the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia] No. 11, 26 March 1991, p. 11–15.

the best possible relations with the states which were to be formed in the territory of Yugoslavia because of "economic and many other reasons"; and b) to give priority to the issue of succession (international treaties and economic agreements). The main geographical priority in Slovene foreign policy was given to Europe (European political and economic integration, with the aim of European Community membership). a "special intention" was also cooperation with Central European states because of "common political, cultural and economic roots." In the framework of regional cooperation attention was paid to the Pentagonale[42], the Alps-Adria Working Community and the Assembly of European Regions[43]; the only regional incentive for Slovenia to cooperate with Yugoslav states was its observer status in the Working Community South Adriatic. It is therefore obvious that before and after independence Slovenia did not use its historical experience and geographical proximity to the Balkans as a basis for its foreign policy strategy (and also did not chose the area as a field of cooperation); rather it used its (positive) links to (Western and Central) Europe[44] (as if it had not been or did not perceive itself a part of Europe before) to formulate its pro-European integrations foreign policy strategy.

The foreign policy strategy of 1991 was based on the assumption that the disintegration of Yugoslavia would be peaceful and gradual[45], so when the ethnic conflicts and war subsequently erupted in the area, Slovenia has engaged in a strategy to "get away from the Balkans, no matter what it costs" (Bučar, 1994: 1065) in order not to be linked to the area in the eyes of the international community. Goldsworthy (2002: 33–34) explains that the "flight from the Balkans" was a common strategy of many East European states[46] at that time, not only due to their own perception but also because of the long-term symbolism of geography and historical misrepresentations of the region, which resulted in seeing the Balkans only as a metaphor for conflict, incivility and violence[47]. This also was a reason for Balkan countries to seek to demonstrate that their true allegiance lay elsewhere – in Central and even Western Europe (ibid.). An example of the rhetorical use of geographical and historical perception of the Balkans in the way Goldsworthy (2002) explains is a passage in a document produced by the Slovene Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[48]

[42] Another name for Central European Initiative (CEI) before Poland joined it; after that it was renamed the Hexagonale.

[43] These three were also Slovenia's main regional cooperation frameworks with Central and Western European states during the Cold War. The second and the third are sub-regional cooperation associations, where Slovenia (the entire state) is regarded as one region.

[44] Slovenia was trying very hard to show its "natural connection to Europe" and therefore choice of its foreign policy priority, by further underlining its traditional links, geographic location, intensive economic cooperation and also cultural heritage (Bučar – Brinar 1994).

[45] See Bučar, 1995: 286.

[46] Considering quantitative criteria, the Balkan (border) states are mainly small states – only Romania could not be perceived as such.

[47] For the historical and political development of the use of the term 'Balkanization', see Evans – Newnham, 1998: 45 and Bjelić – Savić, 2002.

[48] The text was written by four (it may be claimed at that time leading) Slovene diplomats upon the tenth year anniversary of an independent Slovene foreign policy.

A special achievement, which is in a great deal thanks to Slovene foreign policy, is that Slovenia as an independent state has started its departure from the region, which it was a part of from the end of the First World War, from the area succinctly named by Krleža[49] as "the Balkans' pub", and in which Slovenia was all this time, despite its attested adaptability, nevertheless a foreign body (Rupel et al., 2000).

Bučar (1995: 293) states that all previous Slovene foreign policy orientations (before independence) including Balkan cooperation were increasingly neglected.[50] "Slovenia did not seek to participate in any system centred on the Balkan Region /…/; instead it sought to remove itself entirely from the Balkan maelstrom /…/" (Bukowski, 2002: 76). Slovenia was rather more actively cooperating regionally with members of the Visegrád Four,[51] within the Central European Initiative (CEI), and other more western-oriented regional cooperation. Therefore, Slovenia initially did not want to participate in the South Eastern Cooperation Initiative (SECI), launched in 1996, nor in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SP SEE), launched in 1999 (Bučar, 2001: 144). The government feared that if it joined SECI, the opposition would interpret that as an act of re-establishing the former Yugoslavia (Bučar & Šterbenc, 2002: 105)[52]. This indecisive position of Slovene foreign policy could be explained by the fact that after 1991 Slovenia had practically no foreign policy strategy on which all domestic political actors would agree[53], "since political parties, at least most of them, seem to have been confusing their party interests with foreign policy national interest" (Bučar, 1995: 288). This fact, accompanied by structurally more unsatisfactory organization and performance due to the fact that the state was young and had little (or non-positive) tradition of foreign policy was at the time clearly one of the permanent features of Slovene foreign policy internal environments[54]. The latter was one of the reasons for Slovenia's initial unwillingness to participate in the SP SEE, as in 1999 there were "grand debates" within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself as to how Slovenia should define its role and cooperation within the SP SEE (Kliner, 2005).[55] When Slovenia

[49] Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981); a Croatian essay writer, poet and scholar.

[50] Bučar (2001: 144) even observes that immediately after independence Slovenia had a superior and distant attitude towards Eastern European countries (Bučar, 2001: 144).

[51] Nevertheless, Slovenia never became a member of the Visegrád Group. The state did consider (in 1993) joining the group, but did not pursue this policy because it was told by the members that the association would formally cease to meet, since it did not have any formal structure, nor common action or coordination (Drnovšek, 1997).

[52] Slovenia joined United States-sponsored SECI in March 1997 only after the United States expressed that "the international community expected a more determined involvement of Slovenia in regional affairs". The USA indirectly linked Slovene SECI participation with better prospects for NATO membership (Bučar – Šterbenc 2002: 105). This information was contained in a personal letter of the American President to the Slovene Prime Minister (ibid.). The event is not mentioned in the Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996.

[53] Even the strategy of 1991 was not an official document since it was not endorsed by the parliament due to various political parties' inability to agree on the common security and military position of the state (Bučar, 1995: 287).

[54] Bučar (2001) describes conceptual-strategic (planning), organizational-technical (implementation) and political-personal Slovene foreign policy problems.

[55] Some claimed that if Slovenia participated in the SP SEE, the international community would see that as an act of re-establishing former Yugoslavia. At the same time Slovenia was also trying very hard to

joined the SECI and the SP SEE its previous foreign policy action was turned around by the country's use of historical context and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans (i.e. '"away from the Balkans" perception). The government produced a Declaration on Foreign Policy at the end of 1999.[56] In the document Slovenia expressed its recognition that due to its political, security, economic and other interests it has to be present and active in the area of Southeastern Europe. The document states that Slovenia has to become an important and credible partner of the international community in this part of Europe and also describes Slovene participation in the SP SEE. The Declaration concludes that "on the basis of its geographical, political, economic and historical predispositions, Slovenia can offer "Good Offices" in solving complicated situations in its neighbourhood as elsewhere." It can be seen that the document did not simply represent a change in use of historical experience and geographical proximity regarding the Western Balkans, but that Slovenia's perception of them was turned into a different – active – foreign policy strategy towards the area. Slovenia was to become a mediator in solving the Balkan issues. This strategy was resumed in an even more intensive way in the following official document on foreign policy, called *The Appropriate Foreign Policy* of October 2002.[57] The continuation and gradation of the recently established positive perception of and active strategy regarding the Western Balkans was expressed in the following passage under the title "Central Europe":

"Nevertheless, Slovenia is not only a Central European state; its identity is also built on its Mediterranean tradition and connection to Southeastern Europe; therefore it could be a bridge between different European regions. This is also the perception of other (Central European) countries, therefore Slovenia has to profit from this position and within Central Europe (even as a future member of the EU)[58] assume the role of the leading connoisseur and adviser on political, economic and other problems of Southeastern Europe. "

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establish itself as a Central European state. Therefore, the initial proposal of the international community that Slovenia should be a recipient state was unacceptable to the country (Kliner, 2005). Slovenia did not participate in the founding meeting of the SP SEE in Cologne on 10 June 1999 (*AustrianForeign Policy Report 1999*, p. 27). After it was agreed that Slovenia would be a *donor* Central European state to the SP SEE, Slovenia started to participate actively at a high diplomatic level (*Poročilo Ministrstva za zunanje zadeve 1999* [Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1999], p. 88). The change in foreign policy stance occurred also due to very high expectations regarding the Slovene role in the SP SEE on the part of the international community, especially the EU (Kliner, 2005).

[56] Deklaracija o zunanji politiki Republike Slovenije [*Declaration on Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia*], endorsed by the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia on 17 December 1999. In this document the state's activities regarding the Western Balkans as a whole (SECI and SP SEE) and also cooperation with each of the countries from the area, is presented (Albania is included for the first time).

[57] Primerna zunanja politika – Temeljne prvine zunanje politike Republike Slovenije ob vključevanju v evroatlantske povezave [*An appropriate foreign policy – the basic elements of Slovene foreign policy in its integration in Euro-Atlantic alliances*], adopted by the government of the Republic of Slovenia on 10 October 2002.

[58] Under the title *The Slovene Contribution in the EU*, this document stated that within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy Slovenia will have to concentrate on the area of Mediterranean and Southeastern Europe, since it has the advantage of knowing the conditions in the area.

The presented new orientation of the foreign policy strategy is based the on the Slovene multiple identity, although (ironically) the (European) identity building just after independence was the reason to use the ”away from the Balkans” narrative in the first place. This is not so unusual and could be explained by the fact that Slovenia was at the time a new state, yet entering the international community, and as such it was its task to secure its proper, autonomous political identity (Benko, 1992: 8). At the same time, Slovenia set itself a primary foreign policy goal, which was to enter European integration and ultimately join the EU. Knudsen (2002: 184) notes that “paradoxically, state-building and integration beyond the state are thus closely linked while also being mutually conflicting.” The author explains this identity/integration problem; identity in the outset is usually determined by a matter of finding out who one thinks one is not (Knudsen, 2002: 189). In this regard it is possible to understand the use of ”away from the Balkans” narrative based on the general Slovene negative perception of historical experience of and geographical proximity to the Balkans. Therefore, the Balkans during Slovene state-building were ”the usable past” defining what Slovenia’s identity is not, just as it was the case in other (small) Eastern European states.[59] As Mouritzen (1998: 92) says, political actors got used to this, and natural stereotypes were applied on the units in the neighbourhood, which leads to domestic institutionalization of this environment – claiming that links to the Balkans impede Slovenia from being perceived as a Central European state, ready for European integration. Therefore, only external pressures, high expectations of Slovenia’s role in the region and promises to treat it as a Central European state made Slovenia change its perception of and foreign policy action towards the Western Balkans and re-include the area in its identity concept. Afterwards Slovenia used the historical experience and geographical proximity to formulate its new foreign policy strategy (and choose a field of cooperation) where its previously negative perception was turned into an advantage and even an opportunity; Slovenia could become a bridge-builder between the EU and Western Balkans (Southeastern Europe).[60] This narrative has now been consolidated and is being used in formulation of foreign policy strategy towards the Western Balkans in the latest government strategic document on the development of Slovenia.[61]

[59] Here, two remarks have to be made. Firstly, it could not be argued that state-building, including creating national identity, was the decisive internal foreign policy determinant for the use of historical experience and geographical proximity to the Balkans in all post-Communist Eastern European states. Some of the latter were not new states (e. g. Romania and Bulgaria), but they still used the negative historical experience in the Balkans as a basis for their pro-European foreign policy. The variable explaining this in this case could therefore be the aim of joining European integration. (For more on the national identity of post-Communist small states joining the EU (case of Slovenia) see Šabič & Brglez, 2002). Secondly, not all Eastern European states were small states, for example Romania. Therefore the use of negative Balkans-related historical experience as a basis for pro-European foreign policy strategy was not limited only to small states.

[60] Pierre (1999) observes: “Slovenes prefer to think of themselves as not part of the Balkans at all. Rather, they like to consider their nation as part of Central Europe, like their neighbours Austria and Hungary, but with some past Balkan experience. Another self-characterization is Slovenia as a valuable bridge to the Balkans, without being a part of the region.”

[61] The document states: “Historical experience and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans are perceived as ”the biggest opportunity for Slovenia to use its comparative advantages (namely common

Conclusion

The findings of both case studies are presented in Table 1. The table shows how the external environment change has influenced the use of history and geography as a basis for foreign policy strategies of Slovenia and Austria regarding the Western Balkans.

Table 1: Geographical proximity and historical experience regarding the Western Balkans in Austrian and Slovene foreign policy strategies

	External environment change	Historical/geographical basis of an active foreign policy strategy	WB*– field of cooperation?
SLOVENIA	1991 – state-building (+ political identity)	Links with Europe from before and in times of SFRY	NO
	1992 – eruption of Balkan conflicts + unstable internal foreign policy environment	”Away from the Balkans” – even more accent on European links	NO
	1999 – external pressure and expectancies regarding its membership in Euro-Atlantic integrations + built Central European identity	Geographical, political, economic and historical predispositions for offering Good Offices regarding Southeastern Europe	YES
	2002 – joining Euro-Atlantic integration, and end of Balkan conflicts	The Balkans as a part of Slovene identity + EU perspective of Western Balkan states	YES/priority in the EU
AUSTRIA	1989 – change of international system	Continuation of the East-West bridge-building role from the Cold War	YES
	1992 – eruption of Balkan conflicts	Danger to its own security in immediate vicinity	YES
	1994 – joining the EU 2001 – end of Balkan conflicts	EU enlargement due to historical, geographical, political, economy links to Central and Eastern Europe + EU perspective of Western Balkan states	YES/priority in the EU

*WB – Western Balkans

history, knowledge of language, culture and traditions) to establish itself (in the EU) as an honest broker and a reference point for the Western Balkans and by this also attain a positive profile in this field of cooperation within the EU.” *Strategija razvoja Slovenije, osnutek za javno razpravo* [*Slovene development strategy, a draft for public debate*], Vlada Republike Slovenije, Urad za makroekonomske analize in razvoj, 2004 [prepared by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Bureau for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development in 2004], p. 26–27, 140–42.

On the basis of the presented analysis of the two small European states it could be concluded that after the end of the Cold War Slovenia and Austria used their historical experience of and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans as a basis for their active foreign policy strategies regarding the area and for choosing their field of cooperation in the international community. However, in the case of Slovenia, this did not turn out to be true on all occasions. Both internal determinants of foreign policy were used when the external environment of foreign policy was changed, but the intensity of the first and the importance of the second depended on the perception of the recent (Cold War) historical experiences regarding the area in proximity (Slovenia's was negative, Austria's was positive). The countries were in different situations regarding statehood; Austria was a well-established Central European state, while Slovenia was a new state in the process of state-building and transition.

Based on this perception and situation, the two states saw their historical and geographical links to the Western Balkans differently; for Austria it was mostly an opportunity to continue its active foreign policy of mediation and bridge-building. Even when the state perceived the geographical proximity as a security threat, it continued this policy and "only" changed its security strategy – from neutrality to EU membership – therefore it could be argued that its policy was only put into another framework due to international system change. On the other hand, after its independence Slovenia did not use its historical experience of and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans, and it did not choose this area to be its field of cooperation because it perceived both the geographical and historical links to the area as a constraint on its identity construction (Slovenia as a Central European state) and its European integration process too (however, the latter does not seem to be a case exclusively applied to small (Eastern) European states, but more to European states in transition). The decisive external determinant of foreign policy in the early years of Slovene statehood was therefore not an international system change, but state-building. When Slovenia asserted its Central European identity and made the perception of its historical and geographical link to the Western Balkans positive, it started to formulate this as a foreign policy opportunity and, as Austria did previously, chose the area as its primary field of cooperation within the EU too.

In this regard, it could be claimed that the European integration process and the role of the EU as an organization also proved to be an important external foreign policy factor determining the use of historical experience and geographical proximity to the Western Balkans as the basis for foreign policy strategies and the choice of a field of cooperation for both selected small states. This could be done for two reasons: 1) because the Western Balkans was an area/issue which was high on the organization's agenda; and 2) given that membership in the organization was the foreign policy goal of the two states, the EU could exercise a direct impact on them (Austria was invited; Slovenia was more pushed/persuaded into cooperation). Since the area/issue has kept or even increased the importance within the framework of Europeanization process, an

interesting subject of further research would be to see how (effectively) the two states are using their identified opportunity to implement their active foreign policy strategy in practice.

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